

dared to come out openly in favour of contraception. Dr. Haire has the distinction of having been one of the first to associate himself with one of the first two birth control clinics opened in London ten years ago.

The misunderstanding with regard to the question of "Government regulation" has arisen, as your editorial note suggests, from a misinterpretation of the rather pompous official phrase "approved by Royal Decree as a Society of Public Utility." In the absence of precise information as to the nature of the "approval by Royal Decree," the phrase was at first quoted exactly as given by Dr. Aletta Jacobs in her Report to the International Neo-Malthusian Conference at The Hague in 1910. Later, when it was known that the expression was the Dutch formula for "official registration," the latter expression was substituted, and will be found in Dr. Drysdale's little book, *The Small Family System*, and other of his writings.

No responsible person connected with the Malthusian League ever claimed that the Dutch Government endorsed birth control, and on the contrary that statement has many times been contradicted, in public meetings and elsewhere, by officials of the League. Nor did the Malthusian League ever claim that Dr. Van Houten (Minister of the Interior 1894-97), and Dr. N. G. Pierson (at one period Minister of Finance), and the other prominent men who were instrumental in founding the Dutch Neo-Malthusian League in 1881, did so in an official capacity. But there is no doubt that it was very largely owing to their support that the League obtained registration in 1894—during Dr. Van. Houten's Ministry.

Dr. Haire says: "It is possible for certain societies to get a certificate from the Government stating that they are societies of public utility"—provided they are run by reputable people. I think, however, the matter goes a little deeper than this. According to the Dutch law (unless there has been a recent modification), whenever a society of any description is formed, it is compelled to send a draft of its Statutes and Bye-laws to the Council of State. If these contain anything illegal, they must be altered; if they are passed by the Council, the society may be granted registration. The registration of the Dutch League, therefore, showed that the Council of State found nothing unlawful in its Statutes, and it gave the League a legal entity, with power to possess property, receive bequests, undertake financial and other responsibilities, and so on—including the power to sue, and to be sued, in a Court of Law. It did not, of course, imply Government endorsement of birth control as such, but considering the nature of the League's Statutes and the universal prejudice against discussion of all such subjects at that time, it is remarkable that it

should have been able to secure registration at all.

The Dutch Government has never officially approved of birth control, and on more than one occasion attempts have been made by reactionary Governments to hinder the propaganda. For example, in 1911 a law was passed forbidding the mailing of practical information *unasked*, and later, in 1927, a reactionary official refused to re-register the League. Neither incident, however, prevented the League from continuing its theoretical and practical propaganda. Since neither political parties nor women's organizations will yet take up the question, there is little likelihood of State action in favour of birth control for some time to come, and the Dutch Neo-Malthusian League and its friends are left to carry on the work. It is therefore exceptionally gratifying to learn that it is opening its first birth control clinic this month, in the year of its Jubilee celebration, and hearty congratulations are due to all concerned in the inauguration.

I am, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

OLIVE M. JOHNSON.

(Formerly General Secretary of the Malthusian League.)

Birth Control International Information Centre,
Parliament Mansions, Westminster.

Aesthetics and Contraception

To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—I was sorry to find no letter in your July issue demurring to this paragraph on page 42 of your previous one: "It is strange that Catholics so seldom, if ever, advance the strongest, least answerable, and surely most aesthetic objection. If an act is repugnant, there's an end on't." I feel that it is a weak objection to anyone who realizes the overpowering repugnance to sex-starvation and food starvation, which are the alternatives to contraception.

B. DUNLOP, M.B.

National Economy and Eugenics

To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—In the hope that you may feel tempted to comment on the matter in your columns, I venture to enclose herewith the copy of a letter I have just addressed to the Prime Minister.

ANTHONY M. LUDOVICI.

To the Prime Minister

SIR,—I understand that in your efforts to place the nation's finances on a sound footing you propose to call upon every section of the community to make substantial sacrifices.

This is no doubt quite right and proper; but let us make certain that nobody is overlooked or spared, least of all any portion of the population which may happen to be contributing nothing to the nation's prosperity and offering no promise for its future.

Now there is a class amongst us which is both a burden and a peril, and on which untold sums are annually spent with a lavish hand. And yet nowhere have I seen them mentioned in the list of those who should share in the general sacrifice. I refer to the 300,000 mental defectives whose education is far more expensive than that of the hale and the sound. I also refer to the hundreds of thousands of cripples, incurables, lunatics, epileptics, deaf and dumb, blind (with the exception of war wounded) cretins, paralytics, microcephalics and hydrocephalics, monstrosities with redundant or deficient members, congenital spastic hemi- and paraplegiacs, etc.

All sound healthy English people of to-day have to limit their families and pinch and scrape in order to provide for this army of physical wastrels who constitute a present crushing burden and a cumulative future menace.

I hope in your survey of the nation you will not omit this section of the community from the list of those who should be called upon to make a sacrifice.

I suggest that the annual expenditure on all this human rubbish should be immediately and drastically curtailed.

Yours obediently,
ANTHONY M. LUDOVICI.

August 15th, 1931.

4, Highfield Hill, Upper Norwood, S.E.19.

On Catholicism

To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—With regard to the very emphatic condemnation of the action of the *Society* by the Pope on the question of voluntary sterilization, it is interesting to note that the practice was known among the Jews, and was accounted as for righteousness.

Has attention been called to the fact that our Lord's teaching is totally at variance to the Pope's Encyclical, which condemns all self-mutilation?

Speaking of adultery, in the Sermon on the Mount, he says :

"If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee, etc."—(*Matthew* v, 29-30, xviii, 8, also *Mark* ix, 47.)

This might have been explained away as merely given by way of illustration and not to be taken literally, but for our Lord's words in *Matthew* xix, 12 :

"For there be some eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb; and there are some eunuchs which were made eunuchs of men; and there be eunuchs, *which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake.*"

Attention may also be called to *Isaiah* lvi, 4-5.

The Pope claims to be the "Vicar of Christ." Which is the greater authority, the Master or his Vicar? It is doubtful whether the Church of Rome will, in the future, claim this Encyclical as "Ex-Cathedra."

It seems there is little to fear from the denunciation of the Pope in this matter, for as St. Peter says (*Acts* v, 29), "We ought to obey God rather than men."

E. G. WHEELER-GALTON.

Claverdon Leys, Warwick.

War and the Unfit

To the Editor, *Eugenics Review*

SIR,—Even if Sir Arthur Keith had suggested that war conduced to the elimination of the unfit, would it not have been true as far as it concerned the wars of this country? Until quite recent times were not our Army and Navy recruited chiefly from what Wellington described as the "scum of the race"? When a boy I more than once heard my grandfather, who was born on January 1st, 1801, declare that when he was a boy all able-bodied paupers, loafers, vagabonds, and habitual drunkards were handed over by the local authorities to the Press gang, or recruiting sergeants, and that a considerable proportion of the able-bodied men convicted of crime and sentenced to be hanged or transported were pardoned on consenting to serve the King. I am old enough to remember when any physically fit young fellow convicted of a non-serious offence could escape prison by agreeing to join the Army.

The Army doctors have always been wonderfully clever in treating venereal disease, and when I was a young man Sergeant Syphilis was reputed to be the most successful recruiting officer.

A large proportion of the poor lads killed in the late war hardly represented the flower of the population. Many of them, probably the majority, belonged to the old Regular Army and its reserves, which were recruited mainly from the unemployed, unskilled labouring class. And many of those who joined up in the early stages of the war were married men whose wives were anxious to secure the separation allowance. During the war the chap unable to support his wife in decency, who was drunken, lazy, or incapable, simply had to join up. If his own